

# Results of Citizen Survey

State Representative

**Shay Schual-Berke**

P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U. S. POSTAGE PAID  
Washington State  
Department of Printing



State Representative

33rd District

**Shay Schual-Berke**



## Results of Citizen Survey

Dear Friends,

In early December, over 13,000 of you received an informal survey from me asking your opinion on important issues ranging from healthcare and education to senior property tax relief and more.

More than 6% of the surveys were returned, which is above the average return on legislative newsletters and particularly remarkable because of the number of questions asked and answered. Although this is not a scientific survey, it gives me an indication of how you feel about these issues, and will help guide me in my actions during this action-packed 60-day 2006 Legislative Session. Limited space prevents me from detailing the responses to every question, so I've selected highlights that I believe you'll find very interesting, along with brief descriptions of what the Legislature is doing about local priorities our survey identified. All survey results are available through my office if you ask for them.

A special thanks goes to all the citizens who wrote and sent back to me such thoughtful and often passionate comments about the direction of our state. Be assured I'm taking your comments to heart. I wish that time allowed me to respond to each one of you.

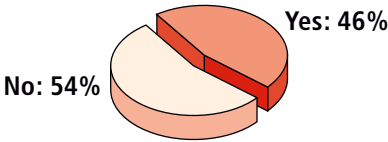
Being a good listener is one of my important jobs as your representative, so please feel free to contact me at any time with your ideas, suggestions and concerns. I'd enjoy hearing from you!

Warmly,

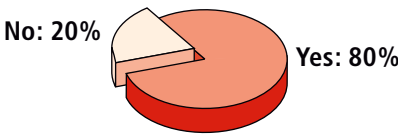
Representative Shay Schual-Berke, M.D.  
33rd Legislative District

### Helping Students Succeed

Would you support eliminating the WASL as a graduation requirement?



Would you support multiple test retakes for students with failing scores?



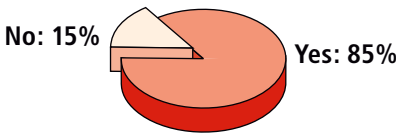
Beginning with the graduating class of 2008 – this year's sophomores – all high school students must pass the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in reading, writing, and math in order to graduate.

Local citizens are deeply concerned about the WASL. A majority (54%) of people who answered my pre-session survey said we should not abandon the test, but fully 80% said students who don't succeed on the first try should be able to retake the test multiple times.

**I support new laws this year to seriously invest in our students** to help them reach appropriate higher standards. These may include added summer school classes, Saturday classes, personal tutoring, before and after school study, test seminars or other locally designed strategies. It's important to find alternative paths to graduation for students who are perfectly capable but don't fit the cookie-cutter approach of high-pressure standardized tests. I'll report back to you on the WASL when the session ends.

### Fair Share in Health Care

Would you support the Fair Share in Health Care proposal?



Health care for the uninsured already costs state residents about \$300 million a year in higher insurance premiums, hospitals and taxes. Unfortunately, responsible employers who provide employee health benefits are being undercut by some large and extremely profitable businesses that don't provide them. Incredibly, the corporation that boasts five of the ten richest people in the entire United States also has more employees in the taxpayer-subsidized Washington Basic Health Plan than any other business. That's just not fair.

You agreed - an overwhelming 85 percent of people who responded to my survey support Fair Share in Health Care, which requires large and profitable corporations to either provide employee health benefits or pay a fee to offset the resulting taxpayer costs for the state covering their employees' health insurance.

**I am a sponsor of the Fair Share in Health Care legislation** and will do all I can to make healthcare available and affordable to all in the state.

**E-mail:** [schual-berke.shay@leg.wa.gov](mailto:schual-berke.shay@leg.wa.gov)

**Olympia Office:** 331 John L. O'Brien Bldg.,  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**Olympia Phone:** (360) 786-7834

**Legislative Hotline:** 1-800-562-6000

**Web Site:** <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/schual-berke/>



# Results of Citizen Survey


## Improving Public Health

**Should public health have its own source of dedicated tax revenues?**

No: 16%

Yes: 84%

Like citizens throughout the state, you recognize that our public health and safety depends on wise investments in public health. The world has changed and we are faced with new and enormous potential threats, like Avian flu or other large-scale catastrophe. We must help our public health system keep pace.



**As Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing** I've introduced legislation (HB 2542) to help our public health system recognize and correct inadequacies in their current operations in immediate emergency preparation for such disaster. We can't wait to fill the gaps in emergency preparedness that we identified in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The children and families of Washington deserve robust public protections to keep us healthy and safe.

## Campaign Finance Reform for Courts and Ports

**Should a law be passed to apply Initiative 134's campaign finance limits to Supreme Court Races?**

No: 4%


Yes: 96%

Reasonable fears that special interest money are fueling a culture of corruption in the U.S. Congress may help explain why 96% of survey respondents said we should expand Washington's campaign finance limits to cover Supreme Court races. **My legislation (HB 1226) to limit the amount of special interest money pouring into Supreme Court and Port Commissioner races** has already received a public hearing, and I look forward to swift passage by the House. The House passed this bill last year, but it died in the Senate. We can't let that happen again.

As a Jan. 10 *Seattle Times* editorial said in support of my bill, "The expansion of the law that has served Washington voters well for 12 election cycles will ensure that special interests do not exert too much influence on public policy."

## Prescription Drug Reform – Next Steps

Many of you know I've worked for years to ease the costs of prescription medicines. This year, I'm leading an effort to save consumers additional millions of dollars by reforming the system of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs), which are private companies that manage the purchasing and reimbursing of prescription drugs for most health plans and self-insured employers. Some of these PBMs are making a tremendous amount of money at this, some of which ought to be going back to lower the cost of your prescriptions or premiums instead.



Consumers Union (publisher of Consumer Reports) estimates that \$16 billion, or roughly 10% of *all* prescription drug spending in the USA in 2002 "was spent on side deals and undisclosed payments from drug companies to PBMs." And just two years ago, one of these companies paid \$29 million to settle a lawsuit that it illegally switched patients' drugs in order to get kickbacks from drug manufacturers.

**Rep. Schual-Berke speaks out on legislation of concern to her 33rd District constituents**



I'm proposing legislation (HB 2473) to require **Pharmacy Benefit Managers to act in the best interests of those purchasing the prescription drugs** and demand full disclosure of any conflict of interest or drug-manufacture kickbacks. Any savings from legitimate drug substitution would be rebated to purchasers — with audits to ensure compliance.


## Senior Citizen Property-tax Relief

**Should the income ceiling for senior property-tax relief be raised further?**

No: 22%

Yes: 78%

Our district supports the increased senior citizen property-tax relief I championed in 2004, and 78% believe we should further increase the number of seniors who get relief. I must report it will be difficult to achieve this in our short 60-day session. The good news is that a growing number of lawmakers agree with me that we should at least **exempt veterans' disability payments when determining eligibility for property-tax relief**. I hope we can achieve this reform quickly.




## Eminent Domain vs. Private Property

**Should the Legislature pass a law that prohibits using government's power of eminent domain to take private land for the purposes of economic development?**

No: 6%

Yes: 94%


The overwhelming opposition to government seizure of private property for the purpose of economic development (such as building office space) will help me persuade lawmakers that **we must enact a law to ensure this does not happen in Washington State**. Legislation has already been drafted. Even though ports oppose stronger safeguards, I believe we can prevail in the Legislature. I have co-sponsored HB 2427 and HB 2626.



## ADDITIONAL 2006 PRIORITIES

### Supporting Highline Community College

Highline Community College is one of our community's greatest assets, and a key to our economic future. That's why I gladly agreed to champion the college's urgent request for state help to fix a dangerous electrical situation.




Parts of the more than 30-year-old high-voltage system are failing. Cable insulation and transformers have deteriorated and are causing dangerous risks of fire and electrical shock. In one recent eight-week period, the high voltage system suffered three catastrophic failures, including transformer fires that resulted in smoke inhalation, building evacuations, and multiple campus closures. More failures could occur at any time, and are inevitable unless the problems are fixed.

At the college's request, I am asking the Legislature to end the danger by **providing \$1.7 million to replace the remaining original cables and transformers**.

### Stopping Unreasonable Insurance Rates

Several years ago, the Legislature took away the power of the elected Insurance Commissioner to reject unreasonable premium increases charged to people who buy health insurance as individuals, rather than through their employer. Insurance companies are making huge profits on these individual plans now, and I am the lead sponsor to **restore the Insurance Commissioner's power to protect consumers by saying "No" to unreasonable rate increases, and also calling for public hearings so that the public can weigh in on proposed premium increases** (HB 2499, HB 2540).



### Protecting Parents Rights

The Federal "No Child Left Behind" law includes a little known provision that requires high schools to send each student's personal information, address and home phone number if requested by military recruiters; schools that do not comply risk losing all federal education funds! Unbelievably, and of great concern, this information is often provided without either the parent's or student's express knowledge or permission. With the help of a private marketing firm, this military database is being merged with other personal information about the children and can include birth dates, Social Security numbers, e-mail addresses, grade point averages, ethnicity and what subjects the students are studying.

Too many parents and students are unaware that the Federal law also permits students to legally "opt out" — tell their school they may not share the information. So I'm proposing HB 2986 to require that all schools **clearly inform parents in writing that this personal information may be gathered** by military recruiters about their children, and clearly provide the opportunity for those families that wish to do so to keep their students' information private.